

THIS MONTH

Carrying a notebook around isn't just convenient for you; it's also handy for thieves looking for something expensive to snatch. Aside from going over the top and handcuffing yourself to your shiny new notebook, what can you do?

Computrace – of which we have an exclusive review on page 16 – is one answer. It won't prevent your notebook from being grabbed, but it lets the company track your notebook's exact whereabouts when it connects to the internet. It worked so well that we couldn't send the test notebook back late, as Computrace knew exactly where and when we'd last it turned on.

We've also got the first two Macs to use Intel's Core Duo processors, the Mac Mini and iMac, and we answer the question on everyone lips: can you run Windows on them? If nothing else, these new Macs show the kinds of designs you can pull off using standard PC hardware, so isn't it time we started seeing more daring designs from PC manufacturers?

David Ludlow
Reviews Editor

david@computershopper.co.uk



APPLE

iMac Core Duo 20"

★★★★★

£1,229 inc VAT

APPLE

Mac mini Core Duo

★★★★★

£599 inc VAT

The Mac mini and 20" iMac are the first Apple computers to use Intel's Core Duo processor. If you're wondering whether you can install Windows on them, we have the answer. It's possible, but tricky, as our FAQ (right) explains.

If you're just after a Mac, the real question is how well do the Intel Macs stack up against the old ones? Apple claims its new Macs are up to four times faster than their predecessors. In place of our usual Windows-based benchmarks, we measured how long it took the iMac to convert a 220MB MPEG1 movie into DV format using QuickTime Pro. The iMac took 29 minutes, which is in line with what we would expect from a Pentium 4 PC, but the older iMac G5 took just under 15 minutes.

We also measured how long it took the iMac to convert a DVD into MPEG4 format using the open-source utility Handbrake. The iMac was much faster, taking 43 minutes compared to the older iMac, which took nearly two hours and 30 minutes. Current Mac applications have to be rewritten to take advantage of the potential extra speed provided by the Core Duo processor, but as our tests show there is still room for improvement. Applications that have not been rewritten, such as Microsoft Office, do run but not as quickly as they would on a non-Intel Mac.

The iMac is still an impressive machine. The 20" widescreen display is very bright and is ideal for watching DVDs or working on two documents at the same time. It has a beefier

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Carrera Octan CS-02 ★★★★★		Dell Axim X51v 624MHz ★★★★★		Dell 3400MP ★★★★★	
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Acer Aspire 5672WLMi ★★★★★		Canon Selphy CP710 ★★★★★		ViewSonic VA1912w ★★★★★	
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HP Pavilion dv5094EA ★★★★★		HP Photosmart 3210 ★★★★★		Epson Perfection 2580 Photo ★★★★★	
Rock Xtreme CT 2.0GHz ★★★★★		HP Photosmart 8250 ★★★★★		Kodak V570 ★★★★★	
		Kyocera Mita FS-1030D ★★★★★		Nikon CoolPix 5600 ★★★★★	
		Kyocera Mita FS-1920n ★★★★★		Nikon CoolScan LS 50 ED ★★★★★	
		Lexmark E120n ★★★★★		Olympus SP-350 ★★★★★	
		Samsung ML-2250 ★★★★★		Panasonic DMC-LZ3BS ★★★★★	
				Ricoh Caplio R30 ★★★★★	



128MB Radeon X1600 graphics card, which should be able to cope with most of today's games; a 256MB X1600 option is also available. We wish the 8X DVD writer was faster and the 250GB hard disk bigger, but we appreciated the inclusion of WiFi and Bluetooth.

The remote control and Media Center-like Front Row software allow you to browse your music, videos and photos easily. It can even play music organised using iTunes on Windows PCs connected to your network. The iLife '06 software included, which is useful for creating music, home movies and web pages and editing photos, is easy to grasp and produces impressive results.

The Mac mini is impressively small. It shares many of the same features as the iMac but uses a slower processor, has an 80GB hard disk and doesn't come with a monitor, mouse or keyboard.

Unlike the iMac, the Mac mini uses an integrated Intel graphics chip so it won't be able to play the latest games. The chip can also gobble as much as 80MB of system RAM, which is annoying as the RAM is difficult to upgrade. The Mac mini did well in our ad hoc benchmarks, taking 33 minutes in

our video test and 46 minutes in our DVD test, just a few minutes behind the iMac. The Mac mini also has Gigabit Ethernet and optical audio in and out, which, combined with Front Row, makes it a perfect compact media centre for pre-recorded video and music.

Apple hasn't damaged its reputation by switching to Intel processors, and the iMac and Mac mini are as beautiful as ever. Until all the software has been converted, though, the new Macs will run a bit slower than previous models. If you're after a Mac, the Mac mini is a competent home PC. But unless you already have a keyboard, monitor and mouse and you don't want to play games, the iMac is a better choice.

Alan Lu

PC SYSTEMS

FAQ

Q Can the new Apple Macs run Windows?

A The new Intel Macs use Intel's intended replacement for BIOS, the Extensible Firmware Interface (EFI). Windows XP doesn't support EFI, so installing it on an Intel Mac isn't as simple as sliding in a Windows CD.

A workaround allows Windows XP to be installed on a separate partition of a Mac's hard disk, allowing you to choose between Windows and Mac OS on startup. The necessary software and detailed instructions can be found at <http://onmac.net>. There are still technical limitations, such as the lack of Windows drivers for the graphics cards, and Apple won't provide any support if you try to use this workaround.

An alternative is Q, an open-source virtualisation package that allows Windows to be run in a window under the Mac OS. Q still needs refinement, though; it's not quite as fast as a real Windows PC and the USB and DVD support is incomplete.

Alan Lu

PC systems and storage expert



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MAC MINI

- ☒ Compact design
- ☒ Memory is hard to upgrade
- ☒ Poor graphics

DESKTOP PC 1.66GHz Intel Core Duo T2300, 512MB RAM, 80GB hard disk, DVD+/-RW +DL, Intel integrated graphics
PART CODE MA206B/A
SUPPLIER www.johnlewis.com
DETAILS www.apple.com

IMAC

- ☒ Excellent display
- ☒ Easy-to-use software
- ☒ Inconsistent performance

DESKTOP PC 2GHz Intel Core Duo T2500, 512MB RAM, 250GB hard disk, DVD+/-RW +DL, 128MB ATI Radeon X1600 graphics, 20" LCD PART CODE MA200B/A
SUPPLIER www.johnlewis.com
DETAILS www.apple.com



Video

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FreeCom DVB-T USB Stick	★★★★
Humax DuoVision PVR-9200T	★★★★
Panasonic NV-GS17B	★★★★
Panasonic NV-GS300	★★★★
Pinnacle ShowCenter 200	★★★★
Terratec Cinergy hybrid T USB XS	★★★★

Audio

page 36

Apple iPod Hi-Fi	★★
Creative GigaWorks G500	★★★★
Creative GigaWorks T20	★★★★
Gear4 Pocket Party V2	★
IXOS XMM628 Subwoofer Speaker System	★★
Koss PortaPro	★★★★
Logitech X-230	★★★★
Sennheiser CX 300	★★
Sennheiser HD 415	★★★★
Sennheiser PXC 250	★★★★
Terratec Aureon 7.1 PCI	★★★★

Networks

page 38

Buffalo AirStation G54 High Power	★★★★
Edimax Edimax BR-6204Wg	★★★★
Hawking HWU54DM	★★
US Robotics USR809600	★★★★
US Robotics Wireless ADSL2+ Starter Kit	★★★
US Robotics Wireless MAXg ADSL2+ Gateway	★★★★

Storage

page 40

Amacom Slimline AMA-BYDVRW2-U	★★
Asus DRW-1608P2S	★★★★
Buffalo 300GB DriveStation	★★★★
Philips 80GB SPD5210CC	★★★★
Plextor PX-750UF	★★★
Samsung SpinPoint SP2504C	★★★★
Samsung Writemaster SE-W164L	★★★★
Western Digital Passport 80GB	★★★★

Components

page 42

AMD Athlon 64 3200+	★★★★
Antec P150	★★★★
ATI All-in-Wonder X1900	★★★★
ECS KN1 SLI Extreme	★★★★
Foxconn RC4107MA-RS2	★★★
Intel Pentium 4 460	★★★★
Leadtek 7900 GT Extreme	★★★★

Software & Games

page 46

3AM Labs LogMeIn	★★★★
Ableton Live 5	★★★★
Adobe Photoshop Elements 4.0	★★★★
Applied Acoustic Systems Lounge Lizard EP-3	★★★★
Avanquest GhostSurf 2006 Identity Protector	★★★★
Avanquest RadioTracker Premium	★★★★
Crashday	★★★
Google Desktop Search 3	★★★★
GoToMyPC Personal 5	★★★★
Macromedia Dreamweaver 8	★★★★
Magix Audio Cleaning Lab 10 Deluxe	★★★★
Microsoft Works Suite 2006	★★★★
Microsoft Visual Studio 2005 Express	★★★★
Mozilla Firefox 1.0	★★★★
Rescue From Rock Castle	★★★★
Roxio Easy DVD Copy 2 Deluxe	★★★★
Serif DrawPlus 8	★★★
Serif PagePlus 11	★★★★
The Sims 2: Open For Business	★★★★
Sony Vegas Movie Studio +DVD Platinum Edition 6	★★★★
Symantec Norton Ghost 10	★★★★
TuneUp Utilities 2006	★★
UberSoldier	★★★★

BYTE SIZE

PLUSTEK OptiCard 820

★★★★
£80 inc VAT

Plustek's OptiCard 820 is a portable business card and 6x4" photo scanner. It's bus-powered, so you don't need to carry around a separate power adaptor.

Plustek bundles CardIris 3.5, the latest version of IRIS' software. You wouldn't think so to look at it, though; it looks like an old Windows 95 application. It works well enough, though.

The OptiCard 820 scans business cards quickly, but each card must be pressed firmly into the loading slot or you'll get an incomplete scan. The quality was good, but there were OCR problems that we had to correct by hand.

The OptiCard 820 works well enough, but CardIris could do with an update.

David Ludlow

SUPPLIER www.scanningpens.co.uk
DETAILS www.plustek.com

ZIP-LINQ Notebook Road Warrior Kit

★★★★
£30 inc VAT



Zip-Linq's Road Warrior kit includes USB extension, modem and Ethernet cables. A fourth cable connects to a mini optical mouse, which is lightweight and accurate, though possibly too small to use comfortably. Also included is a USB LED light.

The leads are all retractable, so you can keep them all in the supplied bag without it becoming a tangled mess.

At £30 including VAT this kit is rather expensive, but if cutting down the weight of your notebook bag is important to you and you'll make use of all the leads, this is a handy set of accessories.

Seth Barton

SUPPLIER PC World www.pcworld.co.uk
DETAILS www.pcworld.co.uk

CUBE 24/7

Lynx

★★★★
£1,199 inc VAT

You could spend a small fortune on a PC if you were determined to buy only the latest technology, but £1,200 is about the right amount to spend if you want high-end performance and features without expense. So we were interested in putting Cube 24/7's Lynx through its paces.

The Lynx tore through our applications benchmarks, especially our video-encoding and multitasking tests, which benefit from the dual-core Athlon 64 X2 4200+ processor. Its video-editing capabilities are further helped by a FireWire port, for connecting digital video cameras, and the huge 500GB of storage for your video clips.

This 500GB is provided by two hard disks in a RAID 0 (striping) array, but you could choose to reconfigure and use RAID 1 (mirroring). In this configuration, you'd get just 250GB of storage, but should either disk fail your data would be safe.

The Lynx can play recent 3D games well, as our Doom 3 test shows. But while Call of Duty 2 was playable on the Radeon X1800XL graphics card, you'll have to lower the resolution or turn off anti-aliasing to get a smoother experience. You'll probably have to upgrade the graphics card in a year's time if you want to continue playing titles at the highest resolutions. This doesn't have to be expensive, as the Lynx uses a CrossFire motherboard so you can add another X1800XL card at a later date.

We were disappointed with the GNR 19" monitor. It struggled in our colour and greyscale gradient tests, showing significant banding. While passable for games and watching



DVDs, it isn't suitable for image editing. The cheap-feeling base is also difficult to tilt and adjust.

You can add extra storage using the two free 3½" hard disk bays if the two 250GB hard disks aren't enough. There are plenty of USB2 ports, but the risers for six of the 10 rear USB2 ports block access to the PCI slots. They will have to be removed if you want to add a PCI card or another CrossFire graphics card.

The Creative P5800 5.1 surround sound speakers are fine for watching DVDs and playing games, but

music lovers may be annoyed by the slight distortion at higher volumes. The three-year warranty doesn't provide onsite service, which could be inconvenient. The Lynx is also quite noisy, so if you plan on using it to write your next novel or record music, the din from the power supply and cooling fans will get irritating.

The Lynx is powerful in Windows, but is let down by its poor-quality monitor and limited expansion options. It is a decent gaming PC, but the Vantage X2 (opposite) has better performance and costs less.

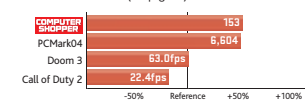
Alan Lu

SUMMARY

- ✓ Powerful in Windows
- ✗ Poor-quality monitor
- ✗ Noisy

DESKTOP PC AMD Athlon 64 X2 4200+ processor, 1GB RAM, 2x 250GB hard disks, 256MB ATI Radeon X1800 XL graphics, DVD+/-RW +/-DL, DVD-ROM, 19" LCD
SUPPLIER Cube 24/7 08702 421179
DETAILS www.cube247.co.uk

PERFORMANCE (see page 60)



Also consider...

CARRERA Octan CS-02

★★★★★
£809 inc VAT

BEST BUY Carrera's Octan CS-02 has a powerful dual-core Athlon 64 X2 3800+ processor, which helped it to a particularly good score in our video-encoding test. Its overall score was pretty good, too, so this PC should cope with any application you want to use. It's helped along by a generous 1GB of RAM.

Graphics are supplied by an ATI Radeon X800GT graphics card, which powered Doom 3 to a respectable frame rate. It will happily cope with today's games. The 17" Sony LCD is easy to adjust, but its backlight was slightly uneven and white areas of the screen were not totally pure. It's also supplied with Creative Inspire P5800 surround-sound speakers.



A 250GB hard disk is standard for the price and offers plenty of room for your pictures, music, videos and applications. The Octan CS-02 is a powerful computer at a good price.

DESKTOP PC AMD Athlon 64 X2 3800+, 1GB RAM, 250GB hard disk, 256MB ATI Radeon X800GT, DVD+/-RW DL, 17" LCD SUPPLIER Watford Electronics 08716 661616 DETAILS www.savastore.com ✓ Very fast in Windows, large hard disk ✗ No FireWire ports FULL REVIEW Mar 2006

VANTAGE

X2 Extreme Gaming System

★★★★★

£999 inc VAT

If you want to play the latest games, you probably think you need to buy a really expensive PC. Vantage's X2 shows that this doesn't have to be the case.

Despite costing under £1,000, the X2 packs in an Nvidia GeForce 7800 GTX graphics card. Although the 7800 GTX is no longer Nvidia's top-of-the-line card, our tests show it can still produce impressive results. It steamed through our Doom 3 and Call of Duty 2 tests. While the X2 should have no trouble with the latest games, it is also SLI-capable, so you can add another 7800 GTX for a healthy 3D performance boost.

The X2 also performed well in Windows, as shown in our applications benchmarks, thanks to the dual-core Athlon 64 X2 3800+ processor and a healthy 1GB of RAM. We would have preferred a larger hard disk, although 250GB should be enough for most. The convenient second optical drive makes copying CDs easier.

While we were pleased by the X2's performance, we were disappointed by the poor-quality 19" monitor bundled with it. Although good enough for playing games and web browsing, it isn't suitable for editing photos. It suffered from significant banding in both our colour and greyscale transition tests.

It's not uncommon for PC manufacturers to place all the emphasis on the processor and graphics and ignore the audio capabilities of a computer. Vantage has avoided this trap. It has paired



the Creative Sound Blaster Audigy 4 sound card with Creative P5800 5.1 surround-sound speakers, which will provide an impressive soundtrack to playing games and watching DVDs. The Audigy 4 can support 7.1 surround-sound speakers should you wish to upgrade. The X2 also has plenty of expansion options. There are eight USB2 ports, although two of these are located on a riser that will have to be removed or relocated if you want to add a second SLI graphics card. As well as the two free PCI slots, there are two free 3½" hard disk bays and three 5¼" bays.

The wired Microsoft keyboard and mouse are basic but comfortable. We were pleasantly surprised by the basic version of Acronis TrueImage 9 included. It's not as well known as Norton Ghost, but it allows you to make exact copies of your hard disk, safeguarding your data.

The X2 isn't perfect, and we were disappointed by the poor-quality monitor. But with good performance in Windows applications and 3D games, plus a decent spread of expansion options, it's still great value.

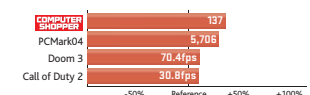
Alan Lu

SUMMARY

- ✓ Windows and games performance
- ✓ Plenty of expansion options
- ✗ Poor-quality monitor

DESKTOP PC AMD Athlon 64 X2 3800+, 1GB RAM, 250GB hard disk, DVD+/-RW +/-DL, 256MB Nvidia GeForce 7800GTX graphics, 19" LCD
SUPPLIER Vantage Computers
08707 442468
DETAILS www.vantagecomputers.co.uk

PERFORMANCE (see page 60)



BYTE SIZE

SAITEK P2900

★★★★★

£30 inc VAT and delivery

Saitek's P2900

is a wireless analogue and digital joypad designed to work with first-person shooter (FPS) titles.

The joypad has rubber grips and is made of high-quality plastic, but it is a bit too wide to be held comfortably. There are six action buttons and four shoulder buttons, as well as twin analogue joysticks.

We tested the P2900 with Grand Theft Auto. The joypad made it easier to control the game than when using the keyboard and mouse. An FPS button takes over control of the mouse and worked well with Doom 3.

The P2900 is good value and brings a console feel to PC games.

Chris Finnamore

SUPPLIER www.girotech.com
DETAILS www.saitek.com



KENSINGTON Notebook Dock

★★★★★

£87 inc VAT

Kensington's Notebook Dock has an integrated USB2 hub, 10/100 Ethernet, 5.1 audio and serial and parallel ports.

It is made of tough plastic and feels robust. The dock is designed to be used with an external keyboard, as the notebook's keyboard is covered up when docked.

The 60705 connects to your notebook using a USB cable. The docked notebook recognises the dock's integrated devices as its own, and we had no problems using the built-in ports and 10/100 Ethernet.

The Notebook Dock is an easy way to add extra ports and 5.1 sound outputs to your notebook. However, it is expensive.

Chris Finnamore

SUPPLIER Dell 0870 907 5818
DETAILS www.dell.co.uk

PC NEXTDAY
Zoostorm 3-4301
Versatile PC

★★★★★

£583 inc VAT

PRICE CUT!

Although it's a budget PC, PC Nextday's Zoostorm 3-4301 managed some respectable scores in our benchmarks. With its 128MB GeForce 6600GT, it notched up a playable frame rate in our Doom 3 test, while the 3GHz Pentium 4 processor and 512MB of RAM made sure that it did well in our application tests, particularly the video encoding.

PC Nextday supplied this PC with an SLI motherboard, so you can easily add a second 6600GT at a later date and improve your graphics performance. This is quite a cheap upgrade to make. However, upgrading the memory is more problematic, as both of



the memory slots are full. While this dual-channel configuration increases performance, it means that you'll have to throw the existing memory away if you upgrade.

That said, the Zoostorm 3-4301 performs well in Windows and as a games machine, all for a very reasonable price.

DESKTOP PC 3GHz Intel Pentium 4 531, 512MB RAM, 160GB hard disk, 128MB nVidia GeForce 6600GT, DVD+/-RW +/-DL, 17" LCD
SUPPLIER www.pcnextday.co.uk DETAILS www.pcnextday.co.uk ✓ Excellent 2D and 3D performance, can add a second graphics card
✗ No free RAM slots FULL REVIEW Apr 2006

BYTE SIZE

Directed by
Roman
Polanski

★★★★★
£30 inc VAT



DVD Roman Polanski has been one of the most daring and controversial film-makers of the past half-century and, although this box set sadly lacks his best work (*Chinatown*, *Repulsion*), even his lesser movies are mostly rewarding. The set includes both of his visually stunning 1970s literary adaptations, *Macbeth* and *Tess*. The absorbing, melancholy Holocaust drama *The Pianist* brought Polanski and star Adrien Brody Oscars, while the oddball comic-erotic thriller *Bitter Moon* with Hugh Grant and Kristin Scott Thomas is underrated. The dreary Johnny Depp hokum of *The Ninth Gate* makes up the numbers, but this is still a decent showcase of a rare talent.

Chris Miller

DETAILS www.sendit.com

MICROSOFT Laser Mouse 6000

★★★★★
£25 inc VAT



Microsoft's Laser Mouse 6000 is a comfortable wired mouse aimed at gamers. It uses a laser to track its movement across your desk and feels much smoother than everyday optical mice.

All four buttons, including a scroll wheel that can double as a fifth button, can be configured. Options include the customisable Precision Booster, which can alter your cursor's speed. The Gaming Toggle can assign multiple keystrokes or short cuts to a button for easy activation.

The 6000 doesn't feel as responsive as other gaming mice, even with the Precision Booster. It is comfortable and customisable, but there are cheaper and more responsive mice available.

Alan Lu

SUPPLIER www.amazon.co.uk
DETAILS www.microsoft.co.uk

CHOOSING A... PC System

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

PROCESSOR: Athlon 64 3200+
MEMORY: 512MB DDR
HARD DISK: 160GB
STORAGE: 16x DVD writer
SOUND: Integrated
SPEAKERS: Stereo
GRAPHICS: Integrated
MONITOR: 17" LCD
EXTRAS: 56K modem
CONNECTORS: 4x USB2, network
SOFTWARE: Windows XP Home Edition
BASICS: Keyboard, mouse
Recommended minimum in grey

1 The minimum specification of PC we recommend, shown in grey above, is a good starting point when working out your ideal system. This PC would cost around £500 and is perfectly capable of running everyday office, multimedia or education software, as well as doing anything on the internet. But it's an unexciting PC. It will be able to play DVD movies, but they won't sound too impressive and modern games are a total no-no.

2 If you're interested in editing your own movies, pay attention to the DVD rewriter. Make sure that you get one that supports both +R and -R formats. It's also worth getting one that will write two-layer discs, as this lets you squeeze twice as much information on a disc. There's not much difference in price between the different drive speeds, so we recommend getting one that can write DVD+R and -R at 16X and DVD+R DL at 8X. If you'll be doing a lot of video projects and disc writing, upgrade to a 250GB hard disk as a minimum.

3 Interested in games? Then upgrade to 1GB of memory and a 200GB disk and get a decent graphics card. Budget cards based on the GeForce FX 6600 graphics processor or Radeon X700 will cope with this year's games, but to play next year's just as smoothly (and enjoy gorgeous graphics today), you'll want anything up to a GeForce FX 7800 GTX or Radeon X1900XTX. You'll also need a faster processor.

4 Which faster processor? Faster AMD processors such as the Athlon 64 3400+ are good value. An Athlon 64 X2-based system will cost at least £100 more but runs multiple tasks faster. The alternative is a PC based on Intel's Pentium 4 processor. These are also pricier, but many people feel reassured by the Intel brand, and the fastest P4s always do well in our performance tests.

5 If you're really not interested in games you can definitely live with integrated or cheap graphics, but there are plenty more reasons to upgrade the memory, hard disk or processor.

If you'll be using your PC for serious DTP, music or photo editing tasks, you need the same kind of processor, memory and disk space as for games. For video editing, consider getting two hard disks, perhaps in a RAID array.

6 A quality sound system will enhance all manner of PC activities. To hear the surround soundtrack of a DVD at its best, you'll need a quality 5.1 speaker system. Games can also use such a system to throw sound effects around you. If you're interested in neither games or DVDs (or don't want to trail wires all around the room), go for a quality stereo pair with a subwoofer to boost the bass instead.

If you're interested in music or want better-quality sound, you'll need to invest in a dedicated sound card. As well as providing enhanced sound, such as Environmental Audio eXtension (EAX), which tweaks the acoustics to make sound appear to be playing in different environments, you'll get higher-quality outputs and more inputs.

7 Although 17" LCD screens save on desk space and look stylish, the limited display size means some may find onscreen text hard to read. A 19" LCD will cost around £50 more, has the same resolution (1,280x1,024) and is easier on the eye. It's better for those who want to edit large photos, documents or spreadsheets, run two applications side by side, or just look important. Twenty-inch LCDs are available from £400 and have a higher resolution (1,600x1,200).

8 The standard set of connectors can be usefully improved with extra USB2 ports, to which most run-of-the-mill PC gadgets attach, and a FireWire port, for fancy gadgets including digital video (DV) cameras.

9 Windows XP Home Edition is preinstalled on most new PCs. Any extra software bundled should be assessed critically. It may be that you'll never actually use it. But equally, you may happen across a PC that includes software you'd otherwise have paid for, in which case you'll almost certainly save lots of money by having it preloaded, though you won't get technical support included.

10 Money left over? A TV card will let you watch television on your PC screen and record programmes to your hard disk, or capture analogue video from a camcorder. Rather than splashing out on an extended warranty, pay extra to get the make of PC your friends or colleagues swear by.

